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ABSTRACT

A guidance counselor and chair of an elementary school's special services team implemented a 10-week practicum intervention designed to improve the school attendance of 107 kindergarten through fifth grade students who were chronically absent. While 49 percent of the truant students lived in an inner-city housing project, 62 percent lived in single family settings. The objectives of the intervention were to: (1) increase attendance; (2) increase parents' contact with school personnel; and (3) improve truants' attitudes toward self and school. Each targeted student met twice with the counselor to chart attendance and attended eight group meetings that explored such topics as decision making, self-esteem, motivation, values, effective communication, stress management, assertiveness training, and absenteeism versus attendance. Individual contingency contracts were developed. Students' parents were contacted through informal notes, telephone calls, and two-parent meetings. Attempts were made to improve parents' attitude toward school and increase their awareness of their ability to influence their child's success at school. Data indicate that the intervention was successful. Related materials are appended. (RH)

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IMPROVING ATTENDANCE AMONG KINDERGARTEN THROUGH FIFTH GRADE STUDENTS USING A MULTI-INTERVENTION PROGRAM

by

IRENE BETANCOURT

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A Practicum Report

submitted to the faculty of the Center for the Advancement of Education of Nova University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Educational Specialist.

The abstract of this report may be placed in a National Database System for reference.

September/1990

Authorship Statement

I hereby testify that this paper and the work it reports are entirely my own. Where it has been necessary to draw from the work of others, published or unpublished, I have acknowledged such work in accordance with accepted scholarly and editorial practice. I give this testimony freely, out of respect for the scholarship of other workers in the field and in the hope that my work, presented here, will earn similar respect.

Signed _____

Abstract

Improving Attendance Among Kindergarten Through Fifth Grade Students Using A Multi-Intervention Program.
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Descriptors: Attendance/Elementary Education/ Parent Involvement/Group Counseling/Self-Esteem

This project describes a program to improve attendance at a school with 1047 students from families of low to high incomes. The primary objective of the Improving Attendance Program was to reduce student absences among chronically truant students. An investigation of actual attendance revealed that absenteeism was a problem that detrimentally influenced every aspect of a student's school experience.

The researcher developed strategies that would seek to reduce the number of absences of a target group of 107 students. Absences were reduced through frequent contact with absentees and parents. A second approach to reduce absences was to increase self-esteem, coping skills, and social skills of target students through small group counseling sessions with the school guidance counselor who is also the researcher.

The researcher calculated absences during a 10 week period. These absences were compared to absences during a 10 week implementation period when target students were exposed to intervention strategies. It was concluded that intervention strategies with students, parents, and school personnel, could significantly reduce absenteeism and foster positive attitudes toward school. Appendices include samples of small group lessons, parent newsletters, coded description of students' family setting, surveys on attitude toward school and self, a sample of a contingency contract, a permission form, small counseling groups schedule, tables showing comparisons of parent conferences prior to implementation and during implementation, and improvement in attendance during two specified periods with and without interventions.

Nova University
Center for the Advancement of Education
3301 College Avenue
Fort Lauderdale, Fl 33314

Observer Verification Form

Verification of Practicum Activity

Dear Observer:

Practicum students in Nova's M.S. and Ed.S. programs are asked to provide external verification that the project activities reported in their final practicum documents took place as described. You have been designated an observer to fulfill this confirmation function by the student named below. On this sheet, then, please write a note attesting to your knowledge of the project activity described in the final practicum report to which this will be attached. (Note that you are not asked to evaluate or make judgements about the quality of the project).

Practicum Title

Student's Name Irene Betancourt

Program Site Lake Magdalene Elem. Date 9-24-90

Observer's Name Marian Peterson Marian Peterson

Observer's position Principal Phone 932-0275

Observer's comment on impact of the project (handwritten): I feel that the positive aspect of the program designed by Irene Betancourt will have a very positive effect on school attendance and will be useful to teachers and counselors — and the students fortunate to be involved.

MP.

Marian Peterson

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CHAPTER I

Purpose

On an average day, eight percent of the students enrolled in the nation's schools are absent (Rogers, 1980). What is being done to encourage better attendance? How successful are these programs?

National health officials estimate the normal rate of student absence due to illness should be around four or five percent a year. In some areas absenteeism averages 10 to 15 percent. The problem is acute in urban schools, where absenteeism rates may reach 30 percent or more. With this thought in mind, the author looked at school attendance.

The school in which the project was conducted is a suburban elementary school located in the southeastern United States. The school is located in a heavily populated, fast growing, affluent section of a major urban area. Many students are bused several miles to and from school because of the size of the district.

According to the Assistant Superintendent of schools, the county is the size of the state of Rhode Island. The school district is currently the twelfth largest in the country. The county school district has a total of 158 elementary, junior high, and senior high schools. The school district is divided into four areas with a total student enrollment of 122,986 kindergarten through high school students.

The school in which this project was conducted serves students from kindergarten through grade five. The school has an enrollment of 1,047 students. Ninety-one percent of the school population is White and nine percent Black. The economic status of families extends from lower to upper middle class incomes. Two percent of the school population receive free or reduced lunch. This suggests that the majority of families fall in the middle income category.

Nine buses transport students to and from the school each day. Seven buses transport children living within a five mile radius of the school and two buses transport children from an inner city housing project approximately 10 miles from the school. Ninety-nine percent of the students living in the inner city housing project are Black.

Parents of students living in close proximity to the school are actively involved in school functions. The school has received several awards for active parent volunteer involvement. The parents serve as volunteers in the clinic and assist teachers.

The parents of students bused from the inner city project are mainly single parents. Most of these households are headed by a female who is usually unemployed and receiving Aid for Dependent Children assistance (AFDC). Many of these single parent households do not have telephones nor own, or have access to, an automobile. Through personal contact with parents from students living in the projects, it was learned that many parents

did not graduate from high school. Many of these parents have limited communication with the school or teachers, because of lack of accessible communication and transportation.

The school has taken steps to hold meetings in a school located in close proximity to the housing project. The three meetings held, since the beginning of 1989, have had no more than five parents participating at any one time. However, the district is attempting to plan more meetings using school social workers as liaisons between the school and parents.

Attendance record keeping in the district is totally automated. The Automated Daily Attendance System was developed to meet requirements established by the Department of Education. Basically, the requirement is that attendance for kindergarten through twelfth grade students must be maintained on a daily basis and must be done electronically. With the implementation of the new attendance system, the homeroom attendance registers will no longer be the official attendance record. The automated system will be the official record of attendance for all students.

The district system uses a bar code reader connected to a terminal used as the input device. According to the district's on-line-student Database manual, absence is defined as the non-attendance of a student on days school is in session. Attendance is defined as the presence of a student on days school is in session. The system begins with the attendance card. The card contains basic student information, a bar coded student number,

and certain enrollment information. The teachers use the calendar on the card to indicate the day a particular student was absent. The teacher will initial the box for that date.

After five days of unexcused absence. the system prints a letter to parents. The letter is used to inform parents that state law is violated when students are not sent to school. School social workers follow-up with home visits documenting attempts to reinvolve the child in school.

The author is the guidance counselor at the school. Responsibilities include chairing a Special Services Team, counseling with individual students and groups of students, and teaching classroom lessons aimed at the affective or social/emotional development of all students. Membership in the Special Services Team, (SST), exposes the author to students experiencing difficulty in the school setting.

The school's SST is comprised of the guidance counselor (chairperson), the school psychologist, social worker, principal, assistant principal, the speech therapist, and teachers of the Learning Disabled, and Emotionally Handicapped. This team works to enhance student academic success. Specifically, the team works to minimize the problems caused by truancy, maladaptive behaviors, and student learning problems. Frequently, as a result of SST meetings, the guidance counselor is called upon to work with students who are chronically truant. While total control over the

situation is impossible, the author works with school personnel, the student, the parents, and legal agencies to encourage regular school attendance.

Success of the educational process is dependent on regular school attendance, as well as continuity of instruction, class participation, and well planned, motivating, instructional activities directed by a competent instructor. Chronic absenteeism seriously undermines the success of the total educational program. Unfortunately, many students remain chronically absent despite attempts to encourage school attendance. Researchers (Galloway, 1982) have gradually recognized that studies of persistent absenteeism should concentrate more on younger age groups, i.e., elementary school age children. A thorough understanding of the dynamics of persistent absenteeism is essential if teachers, school counselors, social workers, and others, are going to adopt a preventive approach to the problem. Educators often see the following stressors as basic underlying factors in absenteeism: chemical abuse by family members, single parent families, step-parent/siblings, intense one-to-one relationships, sexual promiscuity, lack of home supervision, a breakdown of parent/child communication, and individual emotional dysfunction (Hegner, 1987).

Persistent absentees are most often divided into two groups: truants and non truants. Truant students are students who are absent from school without parental permission. While non truants are students who have extreme difficulty in attending school, or refuse to attend school, even with

parent knowledge (Pratt, 1983). School refusal could be a result of scholastic difficulties or it could be a behavioral symptom of an organic or emotional nature. District absentee figures indicate that a problem of some magnitude does exist among a certain segment of the district's population. Besides the organizational difficulties that school absenteeism creates, it also is considered by school personnel to be one of the main paths to dropping out of school.

In a recent study, Galloway (1982) concluded that absentees live in multiple disadvantaged circumstances compared with the regular attenders. The absentees also tended to present more behavior problems at home than attending pupils, but were viewed as being socially isolated outside the home. The absentees also expressed a dislike of particular teachers and resentment toward a curriculum which offered limited success.

During the 10 weeks, beginning October 24, 1989, and ending January 19, 1990, which are 50 students days, which preceded implementation, 107 students accumulated five or more unexcused days of the 180 state mandated student school days, during that time. Absences ranged from five days to 34 days. In the target school, absenteeism does not exist primarily among only one socioeconomic group of students. The students comprising 49 percent of the absentee problem at this school live in an inner city housing project. Fifty-one percent of the absentees live within a five mile radius of the upper socioeconomic school. Examination of the emergency cards of the target

group revealed some helpful information about attendance and family setting. Sixty-two percent of the target group lived in single family settings. In Appendix A:57, target students have been listed by grade and teacher. Each student's family setting was indicated by either a (1) or (2) parent situation. Forty percent of the target group expressed a dislike for school as indicated by pre survey results (Appendix B:60). Academic performance of students in the target group ranged from below average to above average, as evidenced by examination of individual progress reports for the school years 1988-89, 1989-90.

The target group was made up of students randomly assigned to homeroom classes in all grade levels (Appendix C:62). Eleven chronic absentees came from the kindergarten population. Five kindergarten teachers had students in the target group. Each "K" teacher had one or more students that had missed five or more days of school. Kindergarten teacher one had five students in the target group. Student A had missed five days during the 10 week period preceding the implementation period. Student B had missed six days; student C had missed five days; student D had also missed five days and student E had missed nine days. Kindergarten teacher two had three students in the target group. Student A had missed 14 days; student B had missed seven days; and student C had missed 12 days. Kindergarten teacher three had one student that missed seven days.

Kindergarten teacher four had one student that missed six days, and kindergarten teacher five had one student that missed nine days.

Seven of the nine first grade teachers had students in the target group. Teacher one had three students in the target group. Student A had missed eight days; student B had missed 13 days; student C had missed seven days. First grade teacher two had one student that had missed 11 days. First grade teacher three had six students that were in the target group. Student A missed five days; student B missed 15 days; student C missed five days; student D missed seven days; student E missed six days; and student F missed nine days. First grade teacher six had one student that missed 15 days. First grade teacher seven had student A that missed five days and student B that also missed five days. First grade teacher eight had student A that missed seven days and student B that also missed seven days. First grade teacher nine had a transitional first grade class. The transitional first grade class was made up of students that lacked reading readiness skills when evaluated at the completion of kindergarten. The transitional first grade teacher nine had seven students in the target group. Student A missed 18 days; student B missed five days; student C missed five days; student D missed six days, student E missed 10 days; student F missed 10 days; and student G missed seven days.

Seven second grade teachers had students in the target group. Second grade teacher one had student A that missed 18 days and student B

that missed seven days. Second grade teacher two had student A that missed five days and student B that missed seven days. Both of these students transferred to another school during the last week of implementation. Second grade teacher four had student A that missed seven days; student B missed five days; student C missed five days; and student D that missed six days. Second grade teacher five had seven students in the target group. Student A missed eight days; student B missed seven days; student C missed six days; student D missed seven days; student E missed eight days; student F missed seven days; and student G missed 12 days. Second grade teacher six had student A that missed five days. Second grade teacher seven had four students in the target group. Student A missed five days; student B missed six days; student C missed six days; and student D missed eight days. Second grade teacher eight had five students that were in the target group. Student A missed seven days; student B missed eight days; student C missed six days; student D missed 11 days; and student E missed five days. Second grade teacher nine had six students in the target group. Students A, B, C, missed five days; student D missed eight days; student E missed five days; and student F missed six days.

All of the seven third grade teachers had students in the target group. Third grade teacher one had student A that missed six days and student B that missed seven days. Third grade teacher two had student A that missed six days. Third grade teacher three had six students in the target group.

Student A missed seven days; student B missed five days; student C missed five days; student D missed five days; student E missed six days and student F missed six days. Third grade teacher four had student A that missed 12 days; student B that missed six days and student C that missed five days. Teacher five had student A that missed 12 days. Third grade teacher six had student A that missed six days and student B that missed 26 days. Third grade teacher seven had student A that missed five days and student B that missed six days.

All five of the fourth grade teachers had students in the target group. Fourth grade teacher one had student A that missed eight days and student B that missed seven days. Fourth grade teacher two had student A that missed six days and student B that missed eight days. Fourth grade teacher three had five students in the target group. Student A missed nine days; student B missed six days; student C missed six days; student D missed 11 days and student E missed five days. Fourth grade teacher four had student A that missed five days. Fourth grade teacher five had student A that missed six days and student B that missed six days.

All fifth grade teachers had students in the target group. Teacher one had student A that missed seven days and student B that missed five days. Fifth grade teacher two had student A that missed 11 days; student B that missed 17 days and student C that missed five days. Fifth grade teacher three had student A that missed six days. Fifth grade teacher four had

student A that missed eight days; student B that missed 10 days; and student C that missed five days. Fifth grade teacher five had student A that missed eight days; student B that missed five days; student C and student D that missed six days; student E that missed 12 days and student F that missed eight days.

Possible causes for the above unexcused absences may reflect Hegner's (1982) reasons for absenteeism. Again, these reasons include substance abuse, blended or broken families, lack of supervision, and parental control. Clearly, all students were expected to be in school every school day except for illness or other valid excuse. Orthodontic visits were considered valid excuses. This was the ideal situation as it should have been.

The discrepancy existed between the ideal situation as expressed above and the existing number of unexcused absences as detailed above within the chronically truant population. For example, if a student had five unexcused absences then the number of days absent or five, was the discrepancy from the ideal for that student. This author attempted to reduce the absenteeism of the target group 50 percent per student, thus closing the discrepancy.

This project aimed at improving attendance attempted to decrease the number of days individual students were absent. Three objectives addressed the problem. The objectives aimed to increase attendance,

increase parent contact with school personnel, and positively affect absentee students' attitudes toward school and self.

1. Over a period of 10 weeks, target chronically absent students participating in the Improving Attendance Program will increase attendance by 50 percent when compared to student attendance from the previous 10 week period as documented by daily attendance records.

2. Over a period of 10 weeks, parents of target chronically absent students participating in the Improving Attendance Program will have contact with school personnel at least two times as documented by author review of teacher records. Contact included telephone call, letter, or face-to-face conference. The party initiating or requesting the conference will be identified and discussed in the results chapter. Two contacts, initiated by parent or teacher sufficed.

3. Following a period of 10 weeks, target chronically absent students participating in the Improving Attendance Program will respond favorably toward school on a researcher created Likert-type survey. This objective will be met if 80 percent of the chronically absent students respond positively to 80 percent of the questions on the attitude toward school survey.

4. Following a 10 week period, target chronically absent students participating in the Improving Attendance Program will demonstrate positive self-esteem as measured by a Likert-type researcher created attitude survey (Appendix D:65). This objective was met if 80 percent of the

chronically absent students responded positively to 80 percent of the questions in the self-esteem Likert survey. The same 10 question survey was used during pre and post testing.

CHAPTER II

Research and Solution Strategy

In October 1988, the National Center for Education Statistics, surveyed several principals in order to compile a rating of school problems. The school problems defined were student absenteeism, lack of parent interest, discipline, lack of teacher commitment/motivation, teacher absenteeism, teacher turnover, low standards for students, and vandalism. The principals rated the student-related problems of discipline, parental interest, and absenteeism, as the most serious.

School and classroom characteristics can influence attendance. Barth (1982) explained that the Rutter and associates' study of characteristics in a wide range of schools showed attendance levels at the highest for schools that gave homework often; had high expectations for student achievement (regardless of students' abilities); displayed children's work on classroom walls; planned the curriculum by group rather than by classroom; and had higher total teaching time and fewer auxiliary activities. Alternatively, Barth explained that the age of the school building, size of the school, staff provision, and class size had no direct effect on attendance.

The performance of teachers can also encourage or discourage attendance. Attendance is noticeably higher in classes in which teachers arrive promptly, give frequent praise for good work and behavior, interact with the class as a whole, minimize class disruption from reprimands, use

open-ended questions, minimize competition, offer support for learning, and avoid corporal punishment (Barth, 1982).

Barth further explains that in a noteworthy study of one central city elementary school, students in classes with strict, hard grading teachers showed better attendance than students with more lax teachers. Students switching from lax, low-expectation classes to high-expectation classes had poorer attendance at first, but eventually attained better attendance than students who stayed in low expectation classes.

Murphy (1987) successfully used behavioral contracting (or contingency contracts) to decrease absenteeism. In the study Murphy utilized behavioral contracting in a program designed to increase a fourth grader's attendance. The intervention resulted from a collaborative consultation process that involved the student, parent, teacher, principal, and school psychologist. The collaborative aspect of this study was important in that it allowed for active participation of school personnel, parent, and student. Another important aspect of this study was the selection of an intervention, the contingency contract, validated by a data base in behavioral psychology.

Behavior analysts, concerned about the behavior of students in academic settings, have developed programs using contingency contracts to improve academic deficits, truancy, and unemployment (Kelley and Stokes, 1982). Student teacher contingency contracting may have the effect of

strengthening, maintaining, weakening, or eliminating a behavior (Kelley and Stokes, 1982).

In the study, Kelley and Stokes (1982), used student-teacher contingency contracting with behavior problem students. The students involved in the study were participating in a vocational program where the pay had been based solely on attendance. Kelley and Stokes' contracting was contingent on the number of correct workbook items the students completed daily.

The study attempted to evaluate a procedure that would enhance student productivity. The results showed that student-teacher contracting with pay contingent on performance, was effective in substantially increasing productivity, but maintenance of treatments did not occur. An important issue raised by the researchers was for future research to examine the interactions between students and teachers while negotiating contracts. Such an analysis would document the negotiation process, provide information on student and teacher behavior which is important to effective contracting, and might point to procedures for facilitating students' acquisition of decision-making and negotiation skills.

Miller (1986) suggests that school attendance will improve if educators create an attendance policy for the school. Miller advocates publishing this policy in the student/parent handbook, in assemblies, and on plaques or posters in classrooms. Miller also emphasizes daily personal

contact with truant students. This task can be divided among administrators, where each is responsible for a few truants. Frequent contact by note, phone call, conference, or quick hallway discussion can let the absentee know that someone cares and someone is watching.

Personal contact with parents of absentee students is imperative (Miller, 1986). These parent conferences should be scheduled first with the counselor, then an assistant principal, and then with the principal at successive stages of a student's absences. Miller also suggests periodically sending letters to the parents of students with exemplary attendance and praising the efforts of both the students and the parents.

Involving parents in education significantly improves student success according to a text by Henderson, 1984. According to Henderson, research confirms that the family provides the most important learning environment for students. If schools and families are in conflict, students tend to fall behind, become truant, and drop out of school (Henderson, 1984).

The Rochester Pennsylvania Area School District addressed the issue of attendance by creating an absentee prevention program (Hegner, 1987). The emphasis of the Rochester program was on school and home interventions. In-school conferences were held with absentee students to determine students' needs. The students were told that attendance would be monitored by phone calls to parents. Students were also channeled into counseling groups. The group sessions were peer-oriented and concerned

with the topics of decision-making, self-esteem, values, effective communication, stress management, assertiveness training, and school success versus absenteeism.

Comparison figures indicated a slight increase in student attendance after two years of implementation of the Rochester program (Hegner, 1987). An interesting effect of the program has been that those students whose attendance most increased, expressed satisfaction in learning coping skills which taught how to personally seek help in the school setting when a difficult home situation, such as an alcoholic parent, etc., had not changed.

During a year long study conducted by the Danforth Foundation, five school principals in the Charlotte-Mechlenburg School System studied and evaluated what is being done to improve school attendance throughout the county (Rogers, 1980). In the Charlotte-Mechlenburg School system, an analysis of grades and days absent for 4,000 students showed a high correlation (0.89) between the number of days attended and the grades earned. This correlation doesn't necessarily indicate a cause-and-effect relationship, because both variables could be influenced by some other factor. However, correlations of this magnitude make it certain that more than half the variability in grades was directly associated with variability in attendance.

Research on achievement and self-concept suggests that a student's self-concept can be impeded by over and underachievement in the classroom

(Reid, 1982). Research studies on absenteeism have tended to concentrate on the sub-categories of school phobia and truancy. Few of these studies have included personality variables or tests.

Reid concluded that if educators wish to change school absentees' attitudes toward school and education, then educators first have to raise absentees' self-concepts. Alternatively, if educators wish to raise absentees' self-concepts then educators will have to change absentees' attitudes toward school and education (Reid, 1982). The Reid study also showed that most schools had inadequate counseling. Consequently, this lack of counseling makes most of the remedial measures taken by the schools to be punitive. Rule-bound policies further alienated the absentees. This study indicated that schools with poor counseling and support services may tend to promote absenteeism.

The Reid study used seven variables to measure and compare the social backgrounds of the absentees. The variables were the marital status of the parents, the mother's and father's occupations, the size of the family, the position of the student in the family, the housing backgrounds and the delinquency patterns of the students. Absentees' rates of free lunch meals were compared with those of the local and national population and information was obtained on the degrees of involvement of the absentees and parents with the social services.

The results of the study (Reid, 1982) indicated that there were highly significant differences between the marital status of the parents of the three groups. Most of the absentees had parents who were either separated, divorced, remarried, deceased, unmarried or single. Other absentees were fostered or living with relative. The fathers of the absentees worked in significantly lower occupations. Similarly, fewer of the mothers of the absentees had jobs and those that did worked in significantly lower paying occupations. Many of the absentees came from larger families. Significantly more of the absentees were found to have committed a crime. Many of the absentees were receiving free lunch. A very important implication of the Reid study was that school absenteeism has an educational basis as well as a social and psychological one.

Gillmore (1985) attempted to improve the attendance of primary students by involving parents in education. Gilmore's strategies consisted of providing incentives that attracted parents and students to school, personal contact by phone, home visits, newsletters, and workshops. Gilmore concluded that a combination of strategies was needed to resolve the absentee situation at the school. Gilmore's research also suggested that parental attitude needed to be influenced in order to effect a positive change in absenteeism.

In a 1983 critique of the literature on truancy, Brown questioned the validity of research that sees truancy resulting from the maladjustment of

those involved, the families that produce truants, the influence of the families that produce truants, the influence of the families that produce truants, the influence of the community, and the contribution made by the school. Brown suggests that explanations about absenteeism are too simplistic. The researcher (Brown) presents ideas which give attention to the schools' contribution and which recognizes the merits, as well as the limitations of opinions of parents and truants. Browns questions the validity of the theoretical approaches that have predominated studies on truancy in the past. The first of these theoretical approaches views truancy resulting from the maladjustment of those involved. Researchers correlated truancy with 'unhappiness,' 'unsociability' and 'failure to persevere.'

One of the problems involved in using models which describe truants as maladjusted is that many of the studies used students that had been exposed to varying degrees to the authorities in the system. Other researchers (Brown, 1983) used students that teachers defined as requiring the help of educational social workers. Still others (Galloway, 1980) used students who were not only labeled as truants but who were also classified as 'disturbed' or 'maladjusted.'

Brown suggests that truants selected in this way are not representative of truants in general. Research (Brown, 1983) using self reported truants, gives an indication that many truants go unrecognized by teachers and other authorities. Also among the studies that use a psychological approach to

truancy, one finds evidence that raises doubt about the maladjustment of the students used in the studies. Many studies argue that the truants' inability to make friends is a major symptom of maladjustment. Yet some researchers found that truants in academic classes had no friends, but those same students in non-academic classes did have friends (Brown, 1983). Brown explains that in an academic class truants are likely to be surrounded by people who value the things students are rejecting whereas, in a non-academic class truants are likely to have more in common with fellow students.

Brown (1983) also questioned the large number of studies which have indicated that truants most often came from the lower end of the social scale. Social pathologies such as alcoholism, violence, mental and physical illness, and family disorganization were found in many studies to be endemic among the families of truants. While this view of the model sees the parents of truants as predominantly passive victims of a dreadful environment and/or experiencing constitutional inadequacies, other studies viewed parents as hostile to or lacking interest in education.

Brown suggests that there is a possibility that the parents' view of education and the way the parents choose to show that interest is a complex phenomenon relating not only to the way the students' schooling is viewed, but also to other aspects of the parents' everyday knowledge of the world the parents and eventually the students live in. The view of parents of truants

and the parent's interest in education as presented in the literature is too simplistic, because it reflects the evaluation of the situation by teachers, researchers and other commentators and not that of those concerned. Brown urges future researchers to stop using indirect methods of gauging parental interest in school and have some contact with the parents to discover the substance and source of the parent's views. Brown's final model explaining truancy deals with the contribution made by the school. Many studies conducted in the fifties and sixties were concerned with objective factors such as the size of the school, the adequacy of its buildings, the turnover of staff and the efficiency of the attendance administration (Brown, 1983). More recent studies have attempted to look beyond objective factors and consider the social processes and educational environment of the school. Social factors influencing the changing and deteriorating education methods and standards are seen as one cause of truancy (Brown, 1983). Some aspects of traditional teaching, with insistence on the maintenance of certain rules, and the use of corporal punishment, are viewed by Brown as yet another current cause of truancy.

Brown encourages future researchers to examine what goes on inside schools and to become familiar with recent theoretical developments in the study of truants. Brown suggests that researchers should move into the school with a view to study the quality of interaction between pupils and staff and how it is perceived by both.

The author attempted to reduce absenteeism by using the ideas and strategies of Murphy (1987), Hegner (1987), Gilmore (1985), and Brown (1983). The plan to reduce absenteeism in the target school included the use of personal contact with absentees at school through two scheduled individual meetings with the author aimed at charting attendance. The plan also included eight group counseling sessions with the students focusing on topics such as decision-making, self-esteem, motivation, values, effective communication, stress management, assertiveness training, and absenteeism versus attendance.

Individual contingency contracts were included in the plan. The plan included personal contact through informal notes and phone calls, and two scheduled parent meetings aimed at positively influencing parent attitude toward school. The author impacted parent attitude by emphasizing the importance of the parent in school success and increasing parent teacher contact.

CHAPTER III

Method

The methodology employed by the author included resources, people, some equipment, and much time. One hundred seven children actively participated in the project. Table 1:25 is a coded list of the target group. Teachers are grouped by grade levels and each teacher is represented by a number. The students are represented by letters and also grouped by grade level. Each student has two sets of numbers next to the name. The numbers represent unexcused absences. The first set of numbers reflects the unexcused absences incurred during the 10 week period before implementation, which began on October 24, 1989, and ended on January 19, 1990. The second set of numbers reflect absences incurred during the 10 week implementation period beginning on March 5, 1990, and ending on May 21, 1990.

Table 1

A Comparison of Student Unexcused Absences Prior to Implementation and During Implementation

Grade/Teacher	Student	*UPA	*UIA	Grade/Teacher	Student	*UPA	*UIA
K - 1	A	5	3	2 - 9	A	5	2
	B	6	3		B	5	0
	C	5	0		C	5	4
	D	5	2		D	8	3
	E	9	1		E	5	0
K - 2	A	14	1		F	6	1

Table 1 (continued)

Grade/Teacher	Student	*UPA	*UIA	Grade/Teacher	Student	*UPA	*UIA
	B	7	1	3 - 1	A	6	2
	C	12	0		B	7	0
K - 3	A	7	2	3 - 3	A	7	3
K - 4	A	6	0		B	5	0
K - 5	A	9	4		C	5	1
1 - 1	A	8	4		D	5	2
	B	15	16		E	6	1
	C	7	3		F	6	0
1 - 2	A	11	20	3 - 4	A	12	2
1 - 3	A	5	5		B	6	2
	B	5	2		C	5	1
	C	5	1	3 - 5	A	12	0
	D	7	5	3 - 6	A	6	2
	E	6	0		B	26	13
	F	9	2	3 - 7	A	5	1
1 - 4	0	0	0		B	6	1
1 - 5	0	0	0	4 - 1	A	8	4
1 - 6	A	15	1		B	7	1
1 - 7	A	5	4	4 - 2	A	6	2
	B	5	3		B	8	1
1 - 8	A	7	2	4 - 3	A	9	2
	B	7	4		B	6	1
1 - 9	A	18	5		C	6	3
	B	5	1		D	11	2
	C	5	4		E	5	2
	D	6	9	4 - 4	A	5	1
	E	7	15	4 - 5	A	14	6
	F	10	12		B	6	2
	G	7	5	5 - 1	A	7	3
2 - 1	A	18	10		B	5	1
2 - 2	A	5	1	5 - 2	A	4	0
	B	7	6		B	34	17
2 - 3	0	0	0		C	5	0
2 - 4	A	7	1	5 - 3	A	6	1
	B	5	3	5 - 4	A	8	0
	C	5	0		B	10	2
	D	6	3		C	5	1
2 - 5	A	8	1	5 - 5	A	8	2
	B	7	12		B	5	3
	C	7	6		C	6	2
	D	7	1		D	6	2

Table 1 (continued)

Grade/Teacher	Student	*UPA	*UIA	Grade/Teacher	Student	*UPA	*UIA
	E	8	0		E	12	1
	F	7	0		F	8	2
	G	12	10				
2 - 6	A	5	2				
2 - 7	A	7	6				
	B	8	2				
	C	6	1				
	D	11	2				
	E	11	5				

* UPA Unexcused Prior Absences
* UIA Unexcused Implemention Absences

Classroom teachers working with target students provided information on parent contacts, whether teacher initiated or parent initiated. Teachers' record books were used as documentation of either phone conferences and/or face-to-face parent conferences. Classroom teachers often alerted the researcher, before the close of the school day, as to a student's absence from school. All teachers were supportive and enthusiastic about assisting the researcher with information relating to target student absences or parent contact.

The school librarian was very helpful in facilitating space and time for reward sessions, as stipulated in the contingency contract (Appendix E:67), held in the library. Target students experienced a free time popcorn party and one movie in the library. The free time popcorn party was held after these and small group session. Target students were rewarded with a date and a 30 minute time period to report to the library to play games and

socialize with fellow target students while enjoying popcorn. The researcher, the librarian, and two parent volunteers assisted in the experience. A reward movie was also scheduled in the library and was held the week after the fourth small group session. The 107 target students were divided into two groups and were given a time and date on which to report to the school library and view a Walt Disney movie. The movie lasted approximately 40 minutes.

The data processing clerk and the automated daily attendance system allowed the researcher to have a daily input of attendance of target students. Print-outs from the system differentiated between excused and unexcused absences. The school print-out provided the researcher with an opportunity to look at characteristics and incidences of absenteeism.

The researcher prepared for implementation by conducting research and identifying 107 students that had accumulated five or more unexcused absences during the period from October 24, 1989, to January 19, 1990. The implementation period began on March 5, 1990, and ended on May 21, 1990. The researcher contacted all teachers who had students in the target group. The researcher thoroughly explained the research and implementation strategies to all teachers involved. The researcher received confirmation from all teachers involved that the teachers' record book could serve as documentation of conferences with parents of target students. Appendix F:69 is a copy of the brief letter and parent contact log that the researcher

left with each teacher. The researcher checked with all teachers, weekly, to update data on the parent contact log.

The researcher then scheduled 25 minute individual counseling sessions with each of the 107 target students. During this first individual counseling session, the researcher explained the purpose for the research. Also, students were informed as to criteria that were used to target the students. At this time students were asked to participate in the study on a voluntary basis. Students were then given a letter to take home to parents. The letter requested parent permission for the student to participate in the study, and also gave information on how to contact the researcher. Appendix G:70 is a sample of the request for permission sent to parents. All 107 permission letters were returned signed and all parents gave the researcher permission to work with target students. The researcher then scheduled a second individual counseling session with each target student. During this session, the researcher explained that the student would be involved in small group activities for 25 minutes one day a week for the remaining eight weeks of the implementation period. The second individual counseling session ended with each target student being presented the contingency contract. The contract simply stated that the researcher would provide free time, a movie, and a picnic, to each target student that improved attendance. The individual contact was signed and dated by each student and the researcher, who is also the school guidance counselor. The

researcher ended this individual counseling session by having individual students include the student name on a large calendar displayed in the counselor's office. This was a calendar of the 10 week implementation period from March 5, 1990, through May 21, 1990. Students were encouraged to visit the guidance suite before or after school and paste stars on all days students had been in attendance during the 10 week implementation period.

Individual small group sessions began on Monday, March 19, 1990. Students were placed in groups of six, seven, or eight, according to grade level. The researcher scheduled 17 groups. Males and females were mixed in each group. The students were grouped homogeneously by grade level. Due to scheduling conflicts, groups were not always evenly divided with equal number of males and females (Appendix H:75).

There were two groups from the kindergarten age group. One kindergarten group had five students, one male and four females. All of these students came from the same classroom. The other kindergarten group had six students, three males and three females. This group consisted of students from four classrooms.

There were three groups from the first grade. Two groups had seven students and one group had eight students. One first grade group of seven was made up of five females and two males, with students representing three classrooms. The second group of seven students was made up of four males

and three females with all students coming from the classroom. The group of eight first graders was composed of five females and three males with students coming from four different classrooms.

There were five groups of second grade students, with six students in each group. The first group of second graders had three males and three females, with students coming from three different classrooms. The second group of second grade students was composed of five males and one female, with students coming from two classrooms. The third group of second graders was composed of three females and three males with students coming from three different classrooms. The fourth group of second grade students was composed of four males and two females with students coming from two classrooms. The fourth and final group of second grade students was composed of four females and two males, with all students coming from the same classroom.

There were three groups of third grade students. Two groups had six students in each and one group had five students. The first group of third grade students was composed of four females and two males, with students representing three different classrooms. The second group of third grade students was made up of four males and two females with the students coming from two different classrooms. The third group of third grade students was made up of three males and two females, with students coming from three different classrooms.

The researcher scheduled two groups of fourth graders with six students in each group. The first group of fourth graders was composed of four males and two females, with students representing three different classrooms. The second group of fourth graders was composed of three males and three females, with students coming from three different classrooms.

These were two groups of fifth grade students. One group had seven students and the second group had eight students. The first fifth grade group was composed of six females and one male, with students coming from three different classrooms. The second group of fifth grade students was composed of four males and four females, with students coming from two separate classrooms.

The first small group session dealt with decision-making. The objective of the lesson was to introduce students to the idea that individuals can, to a great extent, control feelings and emotions. Students were presented with a simple model of decision-making. The researcher explained the steps involved in making a decision, using the model. Appendix I:78 is a sample of the model.

The second small group meeting consisted of a 25 minute session dealing with self-esteem. The session began with the researcher defining and discussing self-esteem and presenting examples on how self-esteem is formed. The researcher then asked group members to share with the group

things students were good at. Students were then given several geometric shapes to trace. Hole punchers were used to punch holes in each shape. Students then wrote or illustrated something each one was good at on each geometric shape. Yarn was looped and knotted through coil hole. The yarn, with attached shapes, was tied to two small pieces of wood and a self-esteem mobile was created. Students were then asked to complete a Likert-type survey pretest dealing with attitude toward school and attitude toward self. The researcher scheduled presenting the post Likert-type survey at the close of the seventh small group session.

The second small group session ended with students pasting stars on the 10 week implementation calendar. The stars represented days target students were in attendance during the first weeks of implementation. The students were also given the first parent newsletter to take home to parents. Also, a "free time" popcorn party was announced and students were given a time and date to report to the library for the "free time" as specified in the contingency contract. Appendix J:80 is a sample of the first parent newsletter created by the researcher. This newsletter was a brief, illustrated review of group sessions one and two, the topics discussed, and progress of the improving attendance program.

The topic of the third small group session was motivation. The researcher began the session with an explanation and definition of words such as goal, striving, evaluation, performance, and motivation. The

researcher then read a story about Jessie Owens, a world famous American runner. Students were asked to give examples of the words goal, striving, performance, evaluating, and motivation, from the story. The researcher then passed out an activity sheet designed to illustrate motivation which required all students to follow some tangled strings and identify where each string originated. Students then submitted a loose sheet of paper on which students had written a goal to strive for during the coming week.

The fourth 25 minute group session dealt with values, valuing self, and valuing others. The session began with students being asked to share a positive thing or things about each student's own appearance. Then each student was asked to share an enjoyable activity. Again, each student was asked to share with the group something about a valued person. Students were then asked to share some ways to exhibit valuing behavior toward another person. Students also discussed how people had exhibited valuing behavior toward the student. Students were challenged to create a bookmark which illustrated a valuing situation or expressed a slogan denoting a valued person. The students completed the bookmark and the session ended with students being given the date and time of the "free movie", mentioned in the contingency contract. Students then pasted stars on all days in attendance to date, throughout the implementation period.

The fifth small group session dealt with effective communication. This session began with group members defining, discussing, and giving an

example for: honesty, patience, hate, love, self-control, respect, generosity, kindness, friendly, helpful, truthful, and sad. Students were then asked to submit other words for discussion. Students then considered the different ways feelings are communicated nonverbally. The following questions were asked and discussed: 1. What are some ways to communicate boredom nonverbally? 2. Show how to look when excited. Show how to look when calm. 3. Remember a time when someone else did something to be proud of? How did the person look? 4. Which feelings are easiest to communicate nonverbally? The session ended with an assignment for group members to share some nonverbal behavior observed during the week prior to session six. All students then pasted stars on the calendar indicating attendance for that week. Students were given the second newsletter to take home to parents. Appendix K:82 is a sample of the second parent newsletter.

Small group session six, dealt with stress management. The researcher's goal for this session was to help students realize that body stress could be controlled. Students learned that by controlling body stress students could have control over actions and abilities. The session began with the researcher asking the students to list individual physical characteristics noticed when the student became tense or nervous. Students then discussed the kinds of situations which created stress or nervousness. The researcher then had all students take two deep breaths. Students were

then asked to tense up stomach muscles, count to five and relax. Next, the jaw muscles were tensed then relaxed. Finally, the entire body was tensed and relaxed. The session ended with students discussing feelings after the relaxation technique period. The sixth session ended with students pasting stars on the calendar on all days of attendance.

Session seven dealt with assertiveness training. In this session, the researcher attempted to emphasize to the students that being confident and proud of one's abilities and accomplishments was assertive not boastful. A brief discussion of assertiveness ensued. Students were asked to give examples of situations when assertiveness was shown or a situation when students wished to have exhibited assertiveness. Students were then asked to tell of qualities, abilities, and the good points of each one's personality. Students then illustrated five positive points about each one's personality. The students then had to decide on a method from several presented by the researcher, to promote individual skills and abilities. Students were asked to write or illustrate a television commercial advertising personal qualities. Some methods suggested to students were: humor, deception, intelligence, and/or clever slogan. Students were then asked to complete a 10 item post Likert-type survey on attitude toward school and a 10 item Likert-type survey on attitude toward self. This session ended when the researcher distributed the third and final newsletter to be taken home to parents (Appendix L:84). This newsletter briefly illustrated the topic of the sixth and seventh group

meetings. In the letter parents were thanked for the support and enthusiasm provided.

Small group session eight of the Improving Attendance Program began with students reviewing the contingency contract. Plans for a picnic and awards presentation, as stipulated in the contingency contract, were presented. The picnic and awards presentations were the culminating activities of the Improving Attendance Program.

One hundred five target students, involved in the Improving Attendance Program, attended the picnic. Two students were absent on the day of the picnic. The researcher, three parent volunteers, and the librarian assisted with the picnic and presentation of awards.

Award certificates were presented to 66 target students. Appendix M:86 is a coded explanation designating which target students received certificates. Students with zero, one, or two absences during the 10 week implementation period were presented with certificates. Sixteen target students were presented with certificates for zero absences during the 10 week implementation period. Twenty-six target students were presented with certificates for only one absence during the 10 week implementation period. Twenty-four students were presented with certificates for only two absences during the 10 week implementation period.

Evaluation

The researcher observed much enthusiasm from the target students at the culminating picnic and throughout the implementation period. Attendance of chronically absent target students did improve during the implementation period. Percentages of improvement are presented in Chapter IV.

Target students' enthusiasm was most evident during the eight weeks of the small group sessions. The group sessions allowed target students to meet and interact with other target students. The researcher chose topics which addressed some social dynamics influencing attendance which were indicated by the research. Those group topics addressing self-esteem, decision-making, and oral communication were observed by the researcher to be most enjoyed and most discussed by many of the target students. The researcher plans to have more small group sessions on the topics of self-esteem, decision-making, and oral communication in future work with chronically absent students.

The researcher observed, through parent contacts, that the reward activities of free time, the movie, and the picnic, were discussed, at length, by target students and parents. Parents commented to the researcher that target students did want to improve attendance by attempting to overcome obstacles that had previously resulted in absences. The researcher also observed that personal contact with parents was appreciated by parents and

appeared to positively affect target students' attitudes toward school and self. The researcher plans to emphasize parent contact in all future work with chronically absent students. Parent contact resulted in clear communication between the researcher and parents. Through personal contact, either by phone or face-to-face, school personnel can better explain a school policy and can better understand parent concerns and behavior.

Students' attitudes toward school improved after experiencing implementation strategies as evidenced by comparing student responses from pre and post Likert-type attitude toward school surveys. The researcher observed more student enthusiasm and desire to complete the post survey as compared to the pre survey. The researcher observed that added enthusiasm and desire may have been a result of target students establishing a rapport with the researcher and teachers. Target students expressed pleasure in having school personnel concerned about absences.

Students' attitude toward self positively changed when comparing a pre and post Likert-type attitude toward self survey. All students did improve in attitudes toward self. Many students requested permissions to continue contact with the researcher even after implementation ended. The researcher observed that social dynamics, such as single families, can influence a students' self-esteem. The researcher plans to provide classroom teachers with more statistical information on social dynamics like "actual parent and child time," at home.

CHAPTER IV

Results

Stated Objective Number One

Over a period of 10 weeks, target chronically absent students participating in the Improving Attendance Program will increase attendance by 50 percent when compared to student attendance from the previous 10 week period as documented by daily attendance records.

Results

Over a period of 10 weeks, target chronically absent students participating in the Improving Attendance Program did improve 50 percent overall. Table 2:41 indicates individual target student improvement percentages. Percentages in Table 2:41 were derived from comparison of unexcused absences from October 24, 1989, through January 19, 1990, to unexcused absences during implementation from March 5, 1990, through May 21, 1990. Eighty-six of the 107 target students had a 50 percent or greater improvement in attendance when comparing the 10 weeks prior to implementation and the 10 weeks of implementation. Five target students out of 107 target students missed more days during the 10 week implementation period than during the 10 weeks prior to implementation. Four of these five students were in first grade and one was in second grade. Table 3:43 indicates that, by grade level, the greatest percentage in improved attendance occurred in the third grade where 15 of 17 students significantly

improved attendance. Thus, 88 percent of the third grade target population improved attendance during the implementation period. The fifth grade showed an 80 percent improvement in number of target students reducing absences by 50 percent or more. The fourth grade showed a 75 percent improvement in absences of target students. The lowest percentage of improvement by grade level, was seen in the first and second grades. Thirty-one percent of the students in first grade significantly improved attendance during the 10 week implementation. Fifty-three percent of the target students in second grade significantly improved attendance during the implementation period, as compared to the 10 weeks prior to implementation.

Table 2

A Comparison of Attendance Improvement Prior to Implementation and During Implementation

Gr/Teacher	Student	*UPA	*UIA	*%I	Gr/Teacher	Student	*UPA	*UIA	*%I
K - 1	A	5	3	40%	2 - 9	A	5	2	60%
	B	6	3	50%		B	5	0	100%
	C	5	0	100%		C	5	4	20%
	D	5	2	60%		D	8	3	63%
	E	9	1	89%		E	5	0	100%
K - 2	A	14	1	99%		F	6	1	84%
	B	7	1	99%	3 - 1	A	6	2	67%
	C	12	0	100%		B	7	0	100%
K - 3	A	7	2	71%	3 - 2	A	6	1	84%
K - 4	A	6	0	100%	3 - 3	A	7	3	58%
K - 5	A	9	4	56%		B	5	0	100%
1 - 1	A	8	4	50%		C	5	1	80%
	B	13	16	-23%		D	5	2	60%

Table 2 (continued)

Gr/Teacher	Student	*UPA	*UIA	*%I	Gr/Teacher	Student	*UPA	*UIA	*%I
	C	7	3	57%		E	6	1	84%
1 - 2	A	11	20	-81%		F	6	0	100%
1 - 3	A	5	5	0	3 - 4	A	12	2	84%
	B	5	2	60%		B	6	2	67%
	C	5	1	80%		C	5	1	80%
	D	7	5	29%	3 - 5	A	12	0	100%
	E	6	0	100%	3 - 6	A	6	2	67%
	F	9	2	78%		B	26	13	50%
1 - 4	0	0	0	0	3 - 7	A	5	1	80%
1 - 5	0	0	0	0		B	6	1	84%
1 - 6	A	15	1	99%	4 - 1	A	8	4	50%
1 - 7	A	5	4	20%		B	7	1	86%
	B	5	3	40%	4 - 2	A	6	2	67%
1 - 8	A	7	2	75%		B	8	1	88%
	B	7	4	43%	4 - 3	A	9	2	78%
1 - 9	A	18	5	73%		B	6	1	84%
	B	5	1	80%		C	6	3	50%
	C	5	4	20%		D	11	2	82%
	D	6	9	-50%		E	5	2	60%
	E	7	15	-2%	4 - 4	A	5	1	80%
	F	10	12	-2%	4 - 5	A	14	6	57%
	G	7	5	29%		B	6	2	67%
2 - 1	A	18	10	45%	5 - 1	A	7	3	57%
2 - 2	A	5	1	99%		B	5	1	80%
	B	7	6	15%	5 - 2	A	4	0	100%
2 - 3	0	0	0	0		B	34	17	50%
2 - 4	A	7	1	86%		C	5	0	100%
	B	5	3	49%	5 - 3	A	6	1	84%
	C	5	0	100%	5 - 4	A	8	0	100%
	D	6	3	50%		B	10	2	80%
2 - 5	A	8	1	88%		C	5	1	80%
	B	7	12	71%	5 - 5	A	8	2	75%
	C	7	6	15%		B	5	3	40%
	D	7	1	86%		C	6	2	67%
	E	8	0	100%		D	6	2	67%
	F	7	0	100%		E	12	1	99%
	G	12	10	17%		F	8	2	75%
2 - 6	A	5	2	60%					
2 - 7	A	5	5	0					
	B	6	6	0					
	C	9	6	34%					

Table 2 (continued)

Gr/Teacher	Student	*UPA	*UIA	*%I	Gr/Teacher	Student	UPA	*UIA	*%I
	D	8	4	50%					
2 - 8	A	7	6	15%					
	B	8	2	75%					
	C	6	1	84%					
	D	11	2	82%					
	E	11	5	55%					

* UPA Unexcused Prior Absences
* UIA Unexcused Implemention Absences
* % I Percentage of Improvement

Table 3

Grade	*NS	*NSIA	*%I
K	11	8	72%
1	22	7	31%
2	30	16	53%
3	17	15	88%
4	12	9	75%
5	15	12	80%

* NS Number of students from grade level
* NSIA Number of students in grade level with improved attendance
* %I Percentage of improvement

Stated Objective Number Two

Over a period of 10 weeks, parents of target chronically absent students participating in the Improving Attendance Program will have contact with school personnel at least two times as documented by author review of teacher records. Contact will include telephone calls, or face-to-face conferences. The party initiating or requesting the conference will be

identified and discussed in this chapter. Two contacts by parents or teacher will suffice.

Results

Table 4:44 indicates that parents of 86 target students had contact at least two times with school personnel during the 10 week implementation period, as evidenced by the researcher's review of teachers' records and the researcher's own records. Eighty percent of the parents of the 107 target students had at least two contacts with either the student's teacher or the researcher, who is also the school guidance counselor. Twelve parents of the 107 target students had three or more conferences with school personnel during the 10 week implementation period. Twenty-one parents or 19 percent of the parents of the 107 target students had only one conference with school personnel. Thirteen of the 21 parents that had only one conference with school personnel were single parents.

Table 4

A Comparison of Parent Conferences Prior to Implementation and During Implementation

Grade/Teacher	Student	*PCPI	*PCI	Grade/Teacher	Student	*PCPI	*PCI
K - 1	A	1	1	2 - 8	A	0	2
	B	1	2		B	1	4
	C	1	3		C	1	2
	D	1	2		D	0	1
	E	1	2		E	0	2
K - 2	A	1	2	2 - 9	A	1	2
	B	1	2		B	1	2

Table 4 (continued)

Grade/Teacher	Student	*PCPI	*PCI	Grade/Teacher	Student	*PCPI	*PCI
	C	1	2		C	1	3
K - 3	A	2	4		D	1	2
K - 4	A	1	3		E	1	2
K - 5	A	1	3		F	1	2
1 - 1	A	1	2	3 - 1	A	1	2
	B	0	1		B	0	1
	C	1	1	3 - 2	A	1	2
1 - 2	A	0	1	3 - 3	A	1	2
1 - 3	A	1	2		B	1	2
	B	0	1		C	1	2
	C	1	2		D	0	1
	D	1	3		E	1	2
	E	1	2		F	1	2
	F	1	2	3 - 4	A	0	2
1 - 4	0	0	0		B	1	2
1 - 5	0	0	0		C	1	2
1 - 6	A	0	2	3 - 5	A	0	2
1 - 7	A	0	2	3 - 6	A	1	2
	B	1	2		B	0	2
1 - 8	A	0	1	3 - 7	A	1	2
	B	0	2		B	1	2
1 - 9	A	1	2	4 - 1	A	1	2
	B	1	2		B	1	1
	C	1	2	4 - 2	A	1	1
	D	1	3		B	1	4
	E	1	2	4 - 3	A	1	2
	F	1	2		B	1	2
	G	1	3		C	1	2
2 - 1	A	0	2		D	0	3
2 - 2	A	1	2		E	1	2
	B	0	2	4 - 4	A	1	2
2 - 3	0	0	0	4 - 5	A	1	2
2 - 4	A	1	1		B	1	2
	B	1	1	5 - 1	A	1	2
	C	1	2		B	1	2
	D	0	2	5 - 2	A	0	2
2 - 5	A	1	1		B	0	2
	B	0	1		C	1	2
	C	0	2	5 - 3	A	1	2
	D	1	1	5 - 4	A	1	1

Table 4 (continued)

Grade/Teacher	Student	*PCPI	*PCI	Grade/Teacher	Student	*PCPI	*PCI
	E	1	2		B	1	2
	F	1	3		C	1	2
	G	0	1	5 - 5	A	1	2
2 - 6	A	0	2		B	1	1
2 - 7	A	1	2		C	1	2
	B	1	2		D	1	1
	C	1	2		E	1	2
	D	1	4		F	1	1

* PCPI Parent Conferences Prior to Implementation
* PCI Parent Conferences During Implementation

Stated Objective Number Three

Following a period of 10 weeks, target chronically absent students participating in the Improving Attendance Program, will respond favorably toward school on a researcher-created Likert-type survey (Appendix B:61). This objective was met when 80 percent of the chronically absent students responded positively to 80 percent of the questions on a Likert-type survey on attitude toward school.

Results

The pre survey was completed at the second individual counseling session which took place during the second week of implementation. The post survey was completed at the end of the seventh small group counseling session which took place during the ninth week of implementation. Table 5:47 is a comparison of the positive responses of the pre and post likert-type survey on attitude toward school which was completed by target students.

There was a 91 percent increase in the number of positive responses when comparing pre and post survey results dealing with attitude toward school. Ninety-eight target students increased in the number of positive responses on the survey dealing with attitude toward school, when comparing pre and post survey results. Nine target students had the same number of positive responses in the pre and past survey. Of the nine target students whose positive responses remained the same, three were in kindergarten, one was in first grade, one was in second grade, one was in third grade, and three were in fifth grade. The researcher noted that fifth grade students' attitudes toward school appeared to be influenced by the individual's ability in school.

Table 5

Comparison of Pre and Post Survey Results
on Attitude Toward School

Grade/Teacher	Student	*Pre	*Post	Grade/Teacher	Student	*Pre	*Post
K - 1	A	8	10	2 - 8	A	6	8
	B	8	10		B	9	10
	C	10	9		C	9	10
	D	8	8		D	5	8
	E	9	10		E	9	10
K - 2	A	9	10	2 - 9	A	7	8
	B	9	10		B	6	8
	C	8	9		C	8	9
K - 3	A	8	8		D	8	10
K - 4	A	9	10		E	8	10
K - 5	A	9	9		F	9	10
1 - 1	A	8	8	3 - 1	A	5	8
	B	9	10		B	9	9
	C	10	10	3 - 2	A	6	8
1 - 2	A	9	9	3 - 3	A	9	10

Table 5 (continued)

Grade/Teacher	Student	*Pre	*Post	Grade/Teacher	Student	*Pre	*Post
1 - 3	A	8	8		B	6	8
	B	9	10		C	9	10
	C	6	8		D	8	9
	D	8	10		E	7	8
	E	9	10		F	9	10
	F	9	10	3 - 4	A	9	9
1 - 4	0	0	0		B	7	9
1 - 5	0	0	0		C	8	9
1 - 6	A	9	10	3 - 5	A	5	8
1 - 7	A	8	10	3 - 6	A	8	10
	B	7	8		B	7	10
1 - 8	A	9	10	3 - 7	A	6	9
	B	8	8		B	7	10
1 - 9	A	8	10	4 - 1	A	8	10
	B	7	8		B	7	10
	C	7	8	4 - 2	A	5	8
	D	9	10		B	8	10
	E	7	8	4 - 3	A	7	10
	F	6	8		B	8	10
	G	7	8		C	6	8
2 - 1	A	6	8		D	7	9
2 - 2	A	9	10		E	8	8
	B	7	8	4 - 4	A	7	10
2 - 3	0	0	0	4 - 5	A	7	10
2 - 4	A	9	10		B	6	8
	B	8	9	5 - 1	A	7	10
	C	8	9		B	7	10
	D	8	8	5 - 2	A	8	10
2 - 5	A	9	10		B	7	8
	B	8	9		C	7	10
	C	6	8	5 - 3	A	6	8
	D	9	10	5 - 4	A	8	9
	E	8	10		B	8	10
	F	8	10		C	6	8
	G	8	10	5 - 5	A	8	10
2 - 6	A	8	10		B	7	7

Table 5 (continued)

Grade/Teacher	Student	*Pre	*Post	Grade/Teacher	Student	*Pre	*Post
2 - 7	A	6	8		C	7	8
	B	7	6		D	8	8
	C	8	7		E	8	8
	D	9	10		F	7	10

* Pre Survey
* Post Survey

Stated Objective Number Four

Following a 10 week period, target chronically absent students participating in the Improving Attendance Program will demonstrate positive self-esteem as measured by a Likert-type researcher-created attitude survey. This objective was met when 80 percent of the chronically absent students responded positively to 80 percent of the questions on the self-esteem measure.

Results

Table 6:50 is a comparison of the positive responses of the pre and post survey results on self-esteem completed by target students. Ninety-one percent of the target students responded with more positive responses on the post test then the pre test. Nine target students of the 107 surveyed responded with the same number of positive responses on the post survey on self-esteem as on the pre survey. None of the target group responded with more negative responses than positive responses on the post survey as compared to the pre survey results.

Table 6

A Comparison of Positive Responses on a Self-Esteem Survey
Prior to Implementation and During Implementation

Grade/Teacher	Student	*PRPI	*PRI	Grade/Teacher	Student	*PRPI	*PRI
K - 1	A	9	10	2 - 9	A	8	10
	B	9	10		B	8	10
	C	10	10		C	7	9
	D	10	10		D	8	10
	E	10	10		E	9	10
K - 2	A	9	10		F	8	9
	B	10	10	3 - 1	A	9	10
	C	10	10		B	8	9
K - 3	A	9	10	3 - 2	A	9	10
K - 4	A	10	10	3 - 3	A	9	10
K - 5	A	10	10		B	8	10
1 - 1	A	9	10		C	8	9
	B	8	10		D	7	10
	C	8	10		E	8	10
1 - 2	A	7	9		F	8	10
1 - 3	A	7	9	3 - 4	A	8	9
	B	8	9		B	8	9
	C	9	10		C	7	9
	D	8	9	3 - 5	A	7	9
	E	7	9	3 - 6	A	8	9
	F	9	10		B	9	10
1 - 4	0	0	0	3 - 7	A	8	9
1 - 5	0	0	0		B	7	9
1 - 6	A	8	9	4 - 1	A	8	10
1 - 7	A	7	9		B	8	9
	B	8	9	4 - 2	A	7	9
1 - 8	A	9	10		B	8	9
	B	8	9	4 - 3	A	7	9
1 - 9	A	7	9		B	7	9
	B	8	9		C	8	9
	C	6	8		D	9	10
	D	8	9		E	8	9
	E	7	8	4 - 4	A	6	9
	F	6	9	4 - 5	A	7	8

Table 6 (continued)

Grade/Teacher	Student	*PRPI	*PRI	Grade/Teacher	Student	*PRPI	*PRI
2 - 1	A	9	9		B	6	8
2 - 2	A	9	10	5 - 1	A	7	9
	B	8	9		B	8	9
2 - 3	0	0	0	5 - 2	A	7	9
2 - 4	A	8	9		B	8	9
	B	8	9		C	8	9
	C	7	9	5 - 3	A	6	9
	D	7	10	5 - 4	A	7	9
2 - 5	A	8	10		B	7	9
	B	7	9		C	8	9
	C	9	8	5 - 5	A	9	9
	D	8	9		B	7	8
	E	9	10		C	6	8
	F	9	10		D	8	9
	G	9	10		E	5	8
2 - 6	A	8	9		F	8	9
2 - 7	A	8	10				
	B	7	10				
	C	6	9				
	D	8	9				
2 - 8	A	7	9				
	B	8	9				
	C	7	10				
	D	7	10				
	E	8	10				

* PRPI Positive Responses Prior to Implementation
* PRI Positive Responses During Implementation

Target students appeared more enthusiastic when completing the post survey than when completing the pre survey on self-esteem. Rapport among group members, as well as rapport developed with the researcher, may have contributed to observed enthusiasm when completing the post survey as compared to the pre survey.

CHAPTER V

Recommendations

The Improving Attendance Program did help to increase attendance by 50 percent when compared to student attendance from a pre-implementation 10 week period as documented by daily attendance records. The researcher observed that student attendance increased when students connected or bonded with some school personnel. The researcher also observed that attendance improved when students felt capable in the classroom. Target students, experiencing academic difficulty in the classroom, confided this to the researcher. Several teachers responded to requests from the researcher to allow the researcher to arrange a study time during the school day, when a target student could work on classwork with a peer tutor. Peer tutors were students known and trained by the researcher for the peer facilitator program in the school. The researcher strongly recommends the use of peer tutoring, during school, to assist chronically absent students experiencing academic difficulty.

Many target students expressed enthusiasm and excitement about belonging to a group. The researcher observed many positive interactions which occurred in the group setting between students from different classrooms. Group interactions offer peer support.

The parents of target students expressed surprise and gratitude at being contacted by the researcher and or the classroom teacher with positive

interactions predominating. The researcher observed that personal interaction of school personnel and parents resulted in clear understanding by parents of the developmental aspect of learning and the importance that regular attendance plays in the learning process.

Programs aimed at improving attendance will be successful if school personnel address social and academic needs of target students and provide for personal communication with parents of target students. Students experiencing problems in school will benefit from school settings where personnel are concerned with the students' social and academic development. Parents' support and cooperation should be actively sought by school personnel when a student is experiencing any type of problem in school.

The researcher will continue to collect data in search of ways to reduce absenteeism in the school. The author's commitment to establishing a safe, motivating, challenging, and positive school setting is a serious endeavor. As the counselor in a heavily populated elementary school, the researcher will always have attendance information available. This information will be used to locate and intervene with students experiencing attendance problems.

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Appendix A

Family Setting Survey

Kindergarten Teacher:	Students	Family Setting	Teacher:	Students	Family Setting
1.	A	2	3.	A	2
	B	2			
	C	1	4.	A	2
	D	2			
	E	1	5.	A	1
2.	A	2			
	B	2			
	C	1			
First Grade					
1.	A	1	6.	A	1
	B	1			
	C	2	7.	A	1
				B	1
2.	A	1			
			8.	A	1
3.	A	2		B	1
	B	1			
	C	2	9.	A	1
	D	1		B	1
	E	2		C	1
	F	1		D	1
				E	1
4.	0			G	1
5.	0				
Second Grade					
1.	A	1	6.	A	1
2.	A	1	7.	A	2
	B	1		B	2
				C	2
3.	0			D	1
4.	A	1	8.	A	1
	B	2		B	2
	C	2		C	2
	D	1		D	1
				E	1

5.	A	2
	B	1
	C	1
	D	2
	E	2
	F	1
	G	1

Third Grade

1.	A	1
	B	1
2.	A	1
3.	A	2
	B	1
	C	1
	D	1
	E	2
	F	2
4.	A	1
	B	2
	C	1
5.	A	1
6.	A	2
	B	1
7.	A	2
	B	2

Fourth Grade

1.	A	2
	B	2
2.	A	1
	B	1
3.	A	1
	B	1
	C	2
	D	1
	E	1
4.	A	1
5.	A	2
	B	1

Fifth Grade

1.	A	1
	B	2
2.	A	1
	B	1
	C	1
3.	A	2
4.	A	1
	B	1
	C	2
5.	A	1
	B	2
	C	1
	D	1
	E	1
	F	2

Appendix B

Attitude Toward School

Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree

1. I wish I would talk more in class. _____
2. My teacher doesn't like me. _____
3. The kids in my class don't listen to me. _____
4. I'm nervous when I talk in class. _____
5. My class is boring for me. _____
6. I don't like school very much. _____
7. I wish my teacher was friendlier. _____
8. Sometimes I wish I could quit school. _____
9. My mother sees school as a good place for me to be. _____
10. My father sees school as a good place for me to be. _____

Appendix C

Unexcused Absences Prior to Implementation

Gr/Teacher	Student	*UAPI	Gr/Teacher	Student	*UAPI
K - 1	A	5	2 - 8	A	7
	B	6		B	8
	C	5		C	10
	D	5		D	11
	E	9		E	5
K - 2	A	14	2 - 9	A	5
	B	7		B	5
	C	12		C	5
K - 3	A	7		D	8
K - 4	A	6		E	5
K - 5	A	6		F	6
1 - 1	A	8	3 - 1	A	6
	B	13		B	7
	C	7	3 - 2	A	6
1 - 2	A	11	3 - 3	A	7
1 - 3	A	5		B	5
	B	5		C	5
	C	5		D	5
	D	7		E	6
	E	6		F	6
	F	9	3 - 4	A	12
1 - 4	0	0		B	6
1 - 5	0	0		C	5
1 - 6	A	15	3 - 5	A	12
1 - 7	A	5	3 - 6	A	6
	B	5		B	26
1 - 8	A	7	3 - 7	A	5
	B	7		B	6
1 - 9	A	18	4 - 1	A	8
	B	5		B	7
	C	5	4 - 2	A	6
	D	6		B	8
	E	7	4 - 3	A	9
	F	10		B	6
	G	7		C	6
2 - 1	A	18		D	11

Gr/Teacher	Student	*UAPI	Gr/Teacher	Student	*UAPI
2 - 2	A	5		E	5
	B	7	4 - 4	A	5
2 - 3	0	0	4 - 5	A	6
2 - 4	A	7		B	6
	B	5	5 - 1	A	7
	C	5		B	5
	D	6	5 - 2	A	11
2 - 5	A	8		B	17
	B	7		C	5
	C	6	5 - 3	A	6
	D	7	5 - 4	A	8
	E	8		B	10
	F	7		C	5
	G	12	5 - 5	A	8
2 - 6	A	5		B	5
2 - 7	A	5		C	6
	B	6		D	6
	C	6		E	12
	D	8		F	8

* UAPI Unexcused Absences Prior to Implementation.

Appendix D

Attitude Toward Self

Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree

1. I wish I were nicer looking. _____
2. I think other boys and girls are better than me. _____
3. I often feel lonesome. _____
4. I wish I had more friends. _____
5. Most people don't understand me. _____
6. I wish I was smarter. _____
7. I wish I was better in games and sports. _____
8. I am worried about growing up. _____
9. I wish I could control myself. _____
10. I wish I could read better. _____

Appendix E

CONTINGENCY CONTRACT

I _____

agree to improve my attendance. In return, I will enjoy free time, a movie, and a picnic.

Dated this _____ day of _____, 1990.

Signed _____
Contractee

Signed _____
Counselor

Appendix F

Letter to Teachers and Parent Conference Log

Teachers,

Thank you for agreeing to assist me with my research project. I will be checking the attendance data at the end of each school day for the 10 weeks of my implementation (March 5, 1990 - May 21, 1990). As I explained, parent contact, either by phone or face-to-face is a very important aspect of my research. Also, no matter how the parent contact originated, either from you or the parent, please log and date the contact.

Thank you,

Irene

Teacher _____

Parent conference log during implementation (March 5, 1990 - May 21, 1990) period of the Improving Attendance Program.

Students	Parent Contact Phone/Face	Date
example: A (student)	P (phone)	3/12/90

APPENDIX G

Letter for Permission to Parents and Permission Form

L. M. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
February 27, 1990

Dear Parents,

I am currently conducting a research study on attendance. I am concerned about students' attendance because attendance is so important to success in school. As a student at Nova University and the guidance counselor at this school, I am interested in learning reasons for non attendance and what can be done to help parents have their children benefit from a good education.

I will be involved in individual and group experiences with the children for 25 minutes a week, for 10 weeks. I will schedule a meeting or phone any parent wishing more detailed information. You can reach me at school at 932-0275. Your cooperation and support will be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely

Irene Betancourt
Counselor

Permission Form

Please indicate below if _____ has your permission to participate in this group activity.

_____ _____

Parent/Guardian's Signature Date

_____

YES

_____

NO

Appendix H

Small Group Counseling Schedule

Gr/Group	Student	Sex	Time	Gr/Group	Student	Sex	Time
1 - 3	A	F	Th 9:35 - 10:00	3 - 2	A	F	T 9:05 - 9:30
	B	M			B	M	
	C	F			C	M	
	D	M			D	M	
	E	M			E	F	
	F	M			F	M	
	G	F		3 - 3	A	F	T 9:35 - 10:00
2 - 1	A	F	Th 10:05 - 10:30		B	M	
	B	F			C	M	
	C	M			D	M	
	D	M			E	F	
	E	M		4 - 1	A	M	T 10:05 - 10:30
	F	F			B	F	
2 - 2	A	M	Th 10:35 - 11:00		C	M	
	B	F			D	M	
	C	M			E	M	
	D	M			F	F	
	E	M		4 - 2	A	M	T 10:35 - 11:00
	F	M			B	F	
2 - 3	A	M	Th 11:05 - 11:30		C	M	
	B	M			D	F	
	C	F			E	M	
	D	M			F	F	
	E	F		5 - 1	A	F	T 11:05 - 11:30
	F	F			B	F	
2 - 4	A	M	Th 11:35 - 12:00		C	F	
	B	F			D	M	
	C	M			E	F	
	D	F			F	F	
	E	M		5 - 2	A	F	T 11:35 - 12:00
	F	M			B	M	
K - 1	A	M	Th 1:05 - 1:30		C	M	
	B	F			D	F	
	C	F			E	F	
	D	M			F	M	
	E	F			G	M	
K - 2	A	M	Th 1:05 - 1:30		H	F	

Gr/Group	Student	Sex	Time	Gr/Group	Student	Sex	Time
	B	M		1 - 1	A	F	Th 8:35 - 9:00
	C	M			B	F	
	D	M			C	F	
	E	F			D	F	
	F	F			E	M	
2 - 5	A	F	Th 1:35 - 2:00		F	F	
	B	F			G	M	
	C	M		1 - 2	A	F	Th 9:05 - 9:30
	D	F			B	M	
	E	M			C	F	
	F	F			D	M	
3 - 1	A	F	T 8:35 - 9:00		E	F	
	B	F			F	M	
	C	M			G	F	
	D	F			H	F	
	E	M					
	F	F					

Appendix I

Decision-Making Model

1. State the problem or goal.
2. List suggestions for solving the problem or accomplishing the goal.
3. State the advantages and disadvantages of each suggestion.
4. Choose one solution for solving the problem or one suggestion for meeting the goal.

Appendix J

First Parent Newsletter

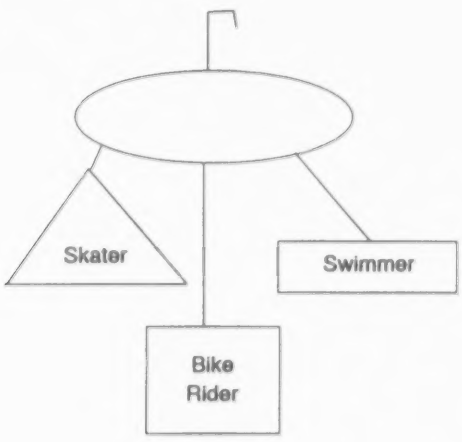
Attention Parents:

We have completed group meetings 1 and 2.

Attendance in all groups has been excellent.

Please contact me, Mrs. Betancourt, counselor, and/or your child's teacher if you have any questions or concerns. Call 932-0275.

Students: Remember your designated "free time" in the library.

Group Meeting 1 Decisions – Decisions	Group Meeting 2 Self-esteem
1. Identify the problem . . .	mobile
2.	
3.	
4.	

Appendix K

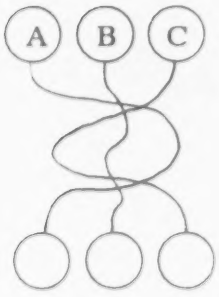
Second Parent Newsletter

Attention Parents:

We've completed three more group meetings and attendance continues to be excellent!

Please contact Mrs. Betancourt and/or your child's teacher if you have any concerns. Call: 932-0275

Group Meeting 3	Group Meeting 4	Group Meeting 5
Motivation	Valuing	Effective communication



students value parents, school, friends, teachers, counselors

Appendix L

Third Parent Newsletter

Attention Parents:

Attendance group meetings will end next week.

Attendance has been excellent!

Please contact Mrs. Betancourt, counselor, and/or your child's teacher for any comment or concern. Call 932-0275.

Thank you for your support and assistance.

Mrs. Betancourt

Group Meeting 6	Group Meeting 7
Stress Management	Assertiveness
relax . . . relax . . . relax	"I can and I will do my best."

Appendix M

Students Receiving Certificates for Zero, One, or Two Unexcused Absences During Implementation

Gr/Teacher	*SRC	*INUA	Gr/Teacher	*SRC	*NUA
K - 1	C	0	3 - 3	B	0
	D	2		C	1
	E	1		D	2
K - 2	A	1		E	1
	B	1		F	0
	C	0	3 - 4	A	2
K - 3	A	2		B	2
K - 4	A	0		C	1
1 - 3	B	2	3 - 5	A	0
	C	1	3 - 6	A	2
	E	0	3 - 7	A	1
	F	2		B	1
1 - 6	A	1	4 - 1	B	1
1 - 8	A	2	4 - 2	A	2
1 - 9	B	1		B	1
2 - 2	A	1	4 - 3	A	2
2 - 4	A	1		B	1
	C	0		D	2
2 - 5	A	1		E	2
	D	1	4 - 4	A	1
	E	0	4 - 5	B	2
	F	0	5 - 1	B	1
	G	2	5 - 2	A	0
2 - 6	A	2		C	0
2 - 8	B	2	5 - 3	A	1
	C	1	5 - 4	A	0
	D	2		B	2
2 - 9	A	2		C	1
	B	0	5 - 5	A	2
	E	0		B	3
	F	1		C	2
3 - 1	A	2		D	2
	B	0		E	1
3 - 2	A	1		F	2

* SRC Students Receiving Certificates
* INUA Improvement in Number of Unexcused Absences